

A NEW CATECHISM PROPOSED.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, North, has a committee which is preparing a new catechism to take the place of the the Shorter Catechism in the instruction of the young. Professor Schaff, of the Western Theological Seminary, Allegheny, has contributed to the Presbyterian Banner a discussion of the reasons for the existence of this committee and the purpose of its work. The reasons why the Shorter Catechism does not today meet our needs, and for composing a new catechism, Professor Schaff sums up under four heads—"The answers of the Shorter Catechism are unnecessarily difficult to be committed to memory—its style is unnecessarily difficult to be understood—it does not present Christian truth in the form Christian thinking now runs—there are additions which might profitably be made to its present questions and answers." Some things he thinks are wanting which should be included in the summary of divine truth which the Church is under serious obligation to give to its children and youth, of which he mentions the missionary duty of the Church, "Go ye into all the world;" and the love we owe to our fellowmen, which is the second great commandment of Christ. He urges also that the Westminster Catechism does not contain any direct and sufficient teaching on the Church, the kingdom on earth, its mission and authority.

We confess to a deep-seated aversion to any substitute that can be prepared for the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. It has had so great history, has had such a large acceptance and use by the strongest bodies of believers and has borne such splendid fruits in the intelligence, character and steadfastness of such a multitude of the followers of our Lord, that it seems an unholy thing to amend its teachings, or to lay it on the shelf as a relic of the past. Freely acknowledging that it is a human statement of truth and can not be perfect, and admitting that it was written many years ago, reflecting the theological views and controversies of its day, it has yet continued to receive the endorsement of a great company of the ablest Bible scholars and most learned and devout religious teachers since the Westminster Assembly.

It has taught and trained a great company of the best Christian men and women the world has ever seen. It has protected from error, and quickened the mind and led upward the thinking, and shaped the lives of the most intelligent and devout of the people of God. It has sanctified the home and bound the young to the Word and to the Church of God. It has gone with the immigrant and his children to new homes in America, in Canada and in the South Seas, and with the Bible has been his library, his school and his church.

Other catechisms have been written, but they have been left as utterly unfit and are forgotten. No one of them has been found to bear comparison with the Shorter Catechism in its exactness of statement of Scriptural truth, in its sense and masterly diction and in its comprehension and completeness. A few years ago a Methodist divine in Virginia, announced that he had read the far-famed Shorter Catechism and found it a poor thing, and that he could make a better one himself. But we have looked in vain for his catechism.

With the present day tides of laxity and the advanced theology, of depreciation of the will of God as revealed in his Word, of the pretensions of authority by human reason, of naturalism and worldly wisdom, one is fearful of amendments, or substitutes or new devices.

The Shorter Catechism may be difficult to commit to memory, but not more difficult than are the words of Scripture, or the rules of grammar or arithmetic or any of the studies necessary for the instruction of the young. It may be sometimes difficult to understand, but so are the verses of Scripture, and so are the principles of any department of learning. It has proved a valuable mental exercise to an uncounted number, and it has fixed in the memory for future unfolding and personal faith and duty, the great essential teachings of divine truth.

Taught by intelligent parents and teachers, it is not wanting in the great message of God's word of love to God and to our fellow-men, for it fully unfolds the duties required both by the first and the second tables of God's law. It is not wanting in teaching the mission of the Gospel to all the world for it teaches what we pray for in "Thy will be done on earth." "Thy kingdom come."

As to the doctrine of the Church, it may be questioned whether the truth as to organic Christianity, the Church, its constitution and polity and mission is not truth which should come after the thorough instruction in personal faith and duty. Our own Southern Presbyterian Church has a brief and excellent Catechism on the Church prepared by our pastor and professor, and admirably adapted for instruction after the great personal foundation of personal religion has been laid in the Shorter Catechism.

You have given the child an inestimable boon when you have written on his thought and memory and heart, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

FRATERNITY.

Everybody admires the evidence and expression of fraternity among those professing the Christian faith. Indeed, our merely human instincts prompt us to approve and cultivate generous sympathies, hearty good will and unselfish friendship. In the more refined and nobler realm of spiritual life, we are entitled to expect clear and constant evidence of that life in mutual approbation, confidence and enjoyment among brethren, even though differing in name and in organic affiliation and possibly in serious conviction.

Happily, we live in an age when this spirit is receiving emphasis. It is cultivated by the church, is commended by the world, and even approved by scoffers. The facilities for giving expression to fraternal sentiments have been multiplied. Complete organization has been conducive to this end. Closer contact in business and social life lends its aid. More intimate acquaintance brings relief from narrow and one-sided judgments. A commendable mutual interest in business life, or in benevolent enterprises, or in church extension at home and abroad, has stimulated the fraternal spirit, and all who are affected thereby are better and happier for it. We can but rejoice in the advancement that has been